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The Things That Pass
—John Sisk

THE

Commonweal

The Essence of Thomas Mann

by Anna Hellersberg-Wendriner

Hope Behind the Curtain

by Gunnar D. Kumlien

Philip T. Hartung James Greene

J. N. Moody Francis Sweeney John Cournos

olume LXII, No. 24 September 16, 1955 Twenty Cents

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THE COMMONWEAL
386 FOURTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 16

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Entered as second-class matter at the post office at Orange, Conn., under the act of March 3, 1879. Published weekly, printed and copyrighted 1954, in the U. S. A. by the Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N. Y., MUrray Hill 3-9685.

U. S. and Canada, $7.50 a year. Foreign, $9.00. Single copies 20¢

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The
Commonweal
week by week

THE WAR ON POVERTY

NEVER before in history has a single nation been so directly and intimately involved in the affairs of other nations as the United States finds herself today. Our State Department actively concerns itself with such detailed matters as the diet in a number of countries of the Far East, life expectancy in Indonesia, Pakistan, India and Cambodia, inflation in Iran, irrigation in Libya, highways in Guatemala and many similar problems.

Such direct concern in the domestic situations of others is unprecedented. How did it all come about? The general framework for this development is a rapidly shrinking world in which the various peoples hear and know more and more about each other. It is a world in which raw materials, factories and markets in many lands are of necessity closely interrelated. The war itself constituted a force that brought many peoples into close working collaboration. And when this was followed almost immediately by the cold war, it set off a chain reaction.

In country after country it soon became apparent that strong military defenses were not possible without national economic strength and political stability. These in turn were found to depend in good measure on better methods of production in farm and factory, which themselves required much improved communications and much higher degrees of literacy, skills and sound health than existed in most countries. If the nations of the free world were to be serious about mutual defense they had to concern themselves with building up these essential foundations.

There have been moments in this country when the wholeheartedness of this latter conviction has appeared extremely doubtful. When India was threatened with a severe famine two or three years ago, Congress took months to approve the dispatch of some of our mountainous grain surpluses. Even today, starvation of considerable proportions is permitted to exist in such next-door neighbors as Haiti and Mexico. If these three countries hold somewhat lesser places in the main strategic defense pattern, it is also true that American aid goes out to many nations whose strategic importance is considerably less.

In his message to Congress March 30, 1954, President Eisenhower explained the connection between economic well-being and military strength. "Beyond our economic interest, the solidarity of the free world and the capacity of the free world to deal with those who would destroy it are threatened by continued unbalanced trade relationships —the inability of nations to sell as much as they desire to buy. By moving boldly to correct the present imbalance . . . we shall . . . increase the economic strength of our allies. Thus we shall enhance our own military security by strengthening our friends abroad."

IN a recent pamphlet on Technical Cooperation in Education the State Department's International Cooperation Administration indicates the basic need in many sectors of the globe: "The essential difference between an American worker and an Asian worker, economically speaking, is in the amount each can produce and in what each earns, as expressed in a standard of living, from his labor. . . . In the underdeveloped countries production is low, rewards are low." Accordingly we have "shared with economically less advanced peoples all over the world the technical knowledge and skills which have played so great a part in our national growth." (President's report to Congress on the Mutual Security Program.)

And so, perforce, America finds herself busy with the pressing day-to-day problems of other peoples: their health, their education, their very livelihood. This tends to be a concern primarily of the American government; there are few signs that it figures as a matter of lively interest to the general public. Even the number of American doctors, technicians and educators abroad, if growing, is comparatively small—especially considering the magnitude of their task.

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Yet these ministrations, even when they continue at a quantitative level far below what is needed, run the constant danger of wounding national pride and arousing resentments that will keep such programs in check. One reason this does not occur more often is the detachment and manifest disinterestedness of the technicians now on the foreign firing line. Another is the substantial results they have so far produced. The hope is that the various programs will be so well set up, and local leaders so thoroughly prepared to take them over, that in country after country foreign technicians will before long be in a position to withdraw. The more often this process is repeated the less fear there will be of American paternalism. One obstacle here is the attraction of a more leisurely way of life.

The other required objective is a similar one. There has been perhaps too much emphasis on American ingenuity, American know-how, American living standards—in official messages for domestic consumption and declarations addressed to other nations. There are other nations in the free world endowed with similar proficiencies. We are all in this together. Just as we are united in bonds of varying degrees to resist further encroachments on the part of the Communist world, so as a result we have become one in a worldwide struggle against ignorance, disease, poverty, insecurity and hopelessness.

There should be far greater emphasis on the collaboration of technicians from many countries who are battling these human problems shoulder to shoulder. Regardless of the proportion of our contribution of men and *matériel,* we should avoid making things of a Point IV character a show which is predominantly American. Where feasible more and more projects should be shifted under the wing of the United Nations. If America can play her major role tactfully in this vast undertaking and if peace can be maintained with honor through the next few years, this series of constructive projects under joint auspices bids fair greatly to lessen the material burdens and demoralizing family anxieties of many harassed peoples.

NEXT WEEK

JOHN C. CORT, writing on the Liturgical Week recently held in Worcester, recalls a quotation from Jacques Maritain that was cited during one conference:

"It is not enough for a population or a section of the population to have Christian faith and be docile to the ministers of religion in order to be in a position properly to judge political matters. If this population has no political experience, no taste for seeing clearly for itself nor a tradition of initiative and critical judgment, its position with respect to politics grows more complicated, for nothing is easier for political counterfeiters than to exploit good principles for purposes of deception, and nothing is easier for human weakness than to merge religion with prejudices of race, family or class, collective hatreds, passions of clan, and political phantoms which compensate for the rigors of individual discipline in a pious but insufficiently purified soul."

THE *DAILY WORKER*

WE have recently been much concerned over the Louisiana sugar strike, and over the widespread silent treatment it has received in most of the nation's press. Expressing this concern in an August 12 editorial, we noted that one of the few newspapers to give the strike coverage was the Communist *Daily Worker.*

Our point (perhaps it should have been spelled-out) was that it is shameful for the nation's press to leave issues of this importance to the official organ of the Communist party: it is a disgrace, where such a clear issue of social justice is involved, that the *Worker* is left an open field to exploit it for its own ends.

And exploit it the *Worker* did. The August 15 issue of the paper carried a banner headline announcing "Catholic Weekly Lauds Worker's Labor News." The news story that followed did not distort what we had said in our editorial, but the mere fact that this story appeared in the *Worker* distorted our original intention, which was most certainly *not* to "praise" the *Daily Worker* but rather to criticize the general press for neglecting its duty.

All this poses a serious question. The general press *has,* on the whole, ignored the importance of the Louisiana sugar strike; and the Communist newspaper *did* report it accurately. If one mentions this fact, however, he risks being used by the *Worker* for its own purposes. What then should one do?

It seems clear to us that one must continue to report things as they are, even at the risk of being used by the Communists. The only alternatives are to ignore things as they are or simply to shut-up entirely. When one is used, however, by Communists or by anyone else, there does seem some reason for setting the record straight, and that is what we would like to do here.

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Will the *Daily Worker* please note, and publish under a page-one banner headline, the following fact? The Commonweal never has, and never will, "praise," the *Worker* for anything, because this magazine knows too well the poisonous motives behind all of the Communist paper's works. If the *Worker* writes something that is true (as it did in the sugar strike story) we will admit that it is true, and we will never be against something merely because the Communist party is for it. But everything the *Worker* represents remains hateful to what this magazine stands for, and no friendship between us could ever be possible.

In an August 5 lead-editorial (which, incidentally, the *Daily Worker* did not report) we wrote: "In this era, two fundamentally different concepts of man and civilization confront each other. . . . The two rival systems are competing for innate superiority and for the loyalty of men all over the world. Whether the war be cold, lukewarm or hot, it is war—and it will be war until one or the other of the two systems changes its fundamental character." This war continues, and in it The Commonweal and the *Daily Worker* fight on opposing sides.

TEN YEARS LATER

THE visit of the Foreign Minister of Japan, Mamoru Shigemitsu, to this country coincides with the tenth anniversary of the surrender of Japan to the United States, in September 1945. The intervening years have been eventful ones, dangerous ones for the entire world, and in many ways everyone has traveled very far.

Ten years ago the world was still recovering from the shock of the reality of nuclear fission, and speculating on uses for good will. The Soviet Union was still our war-time ally, and only a few were warning of trouble from that great area of the world. Japan was still our enemy, portrayed as barely human in the worst type of war-propaganda films. We had yet to see her films such as "Gate of Hell," nor had the Japanese house been set-up in the garden of the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The great numbers of occupation troops had yet to serve their time, and return here, many with Japanese wives, to tell their families of the unique beauty and charm of that vital, mysterious land. Much has changed in the years, but, in one respect we are back where we started.

Japan still has the same problems—intensified—as she has had for at least twenty-five years: too large a population for such a small territory, restrictive immigration laws on the books of nations that could accommodate her overflowing people, and tariff walls around the nations that she would like to trade with. This puts Japan on the spot. And it puts us on the spot.

In some ways Japan's situation is even worse now than it was ten years ago. Then, she had carved out for herself a huge trading area on the Asian mainland. She could send surplus products there, and it held the promise of an area of settlement for her excess population. Now, Communist China is in control of much of the Asian mainland, and Japan is forbidden to trade there.

One of the things Mr. Shigemitsu has come to ask for is an easing of these trade restrictions. It is not difficult to see the reason for this. Mr. Shigemitsu has urged a "realistic" policy of making "what arrangements we can" to achieve coexistence with the Soviet Union.

It is difficult to see how we can do anything else but assent to the reasonableness of his trade arguments. There are dangers here, to be sure, but unless we ourselves can, and choose to, underwrite the economy of Japan indefinitely, we have no alternative course. And this applies to other countries, as well.

In many ways the people of this country have difficulty in facing reality. Even before the war, for example, we objected to Japan's making war on China—and who would say that we were wrong in objecting to aggressive war—but we failed to face up to the possible partial, indirect responsibility we had in sponsoring that war. We opposed any Japanese emigration (of surplus population) into this country on largely racist grounds. And we feared and fought (with tariffs) Japanese trade expansion. We were in concord with other Caucasian-Christian "democratic" Western nations in this two-part policy. And then with a hurt look in our eyes, we denounced the immorality of the "Rape of Manchuria" and the "day of infamy" which was Pearl Harbor.

We cannot continue to live in the world of make-believe where, like Peter Pan, we insist upon remaining boys-who-never-grew-up. The world is too small now, and moves too quickly and dangerously. A strong Japan—and we are bringing pressure on her to build up her military forces—is a Japan which first of all must have a soundly based economy. As Mr. Shigemitsu so wisely said, "I do not believe that mere increase in the number of soldiers will enhance our security much. What is far more important is . . . the active support of the nation. . . ."

These are words to ponder. As are also Mr. Shigemitsu's plea for Japan's admission to the United Nations. Along with Ireland, Italy, and

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several other countries, Japan has a real contribution to make in beating out the difficult pattern of cooperation among sovereign states.

EQUITABLE REWARD

ANNOUNCEMENT of the settlement of the new contract between the UAW-CIO and the Chrysler Corporation granting substantially the same conditions of work and pay and layoff arrangements to the workers as at Ford and General Motors is most welcome. It is another step ahead in helping to remedy one of the many scourges of the age: economic insecurity. Hourly workers in industry have been the victims—ever since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution—of being treated as a commodity.

It is fitting that the automobile industry which, rightly or wrongly, represents to a great number of Americans the vision of what it is that makes the U.S.A. a powerful country, and a desirable one in which to live, should take the lead in this move in a new and better direction.

It seems that it has always been that those who do the hard and basic labor get too little earthly reward for their sacrifices. And those who are clever enough to be able to move around and make adroit manipulations-in-strength get immense rewards for their non-sacrifices. And there are many who neither labor nor maneuver, but simply sit and take advantage of what has been done for them by those who have gone before.

X-number of persons will this year carve up about five and a third billions of dollars which corporations in this country are paying out in dividends. This is about a half a billion dollars more than last year. Some of this will go to widows and orphans. Some will receive just about what they need to maintain an adequate standard of living. Some will receive amounts that will enable them to indulge in conspicuous consumption. There is danger here, for the eyes of a hungry world are fixed upon us.

The wealth of the country—and of the world—exists to enable men to live in a decent manner. And part of this is not having to live in fear of periodic deprivation. It would seem that now is the time—while we are getting on so swimmingly—for us to build into our economy, and our social system, the means to assure that all will have at least enough, even though it might possibly be necessary to curb the hunger of those who already have more than enough. This is what we must do if we would give substance to all our fine talk of "one world" and "justice for all."

FATHER HARTNETT LEAVES *AMERICA*

FOR many years now, The Commonweal has been associated in the minds of many people with *America,* the national Catholic weekly published by the Jesuit Fathers. Such an association seems natural enough. For one thing, the two magazines have somewhat the same format; for another, they both deal with temporal events as seen from a particular Catholic viewpoint; for yet another, they share many of the same aspirations for the Church, the nation, and the world at large.

The editors of this magazine have always been pleased when this association was made, because we have always considered *America* our friend—never our rival. And for the past seven years we have been particularly pleased by such popular association, because since 1948, when Father Robert C. Hartnett became *America's* editor-in-chief, bonds between the two magazines have been greatly strengthened. And under Father Hartnett's editorship, the stature of the Jesuit weekly has steadily grown.

As *America* itself once pointed out, the fact that it is edited by priests places certain restrictions on the magazine that are not felt by The Commonweal, which is edited by laymen. And yet, under Father Hartnett's editorship, *America* has never failed to take a stand on controversial issues when it felt such a stand was necessary. In the heated days of the 1952 campaign, for example, Father Hartnett personally rebuked Senator McCarthy's infamous attack on Adlai Stevenson and thus drew the Wisconsin Senator's unique brand of vilification upon himself. In other major areas of our national life, too, such as on labor, racial and educational questions, the voice of *America* has been strong in defense of decency and reason, and at times it must not have been easy to speak out as courageously as the magazine has done. For all this we are grateful to Robert C. Hartnett, S.J.

We feel real regret, therefore, to learn that Father Hartnett will soon leave *America* to return to the Department of Political Science at the University of Detroit. We will miss him in New York as a distinguished colleague and friend. But we know, also, that under the editorship of Father Thurston N. Davis, who will be Father Hartnett's successor, *America* will surely continue in the tradition of courageous Catholic journalism it has so firmly established. To Father Hartnett we convey our gratitude for work greatly done. To Father Davis we extend our congratulations and best wishes for *America's* future.

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The Essence of Thomas Mann

"HIS WHOLE VISION IS OF THE MAJESTIC DARKNESS OF A MIND ESTRANGED FROM TRUTH BY A LONG GENEALOGY OF ERROR"

ANNA HELLERSBERG-WENDRINER

A SHORT time ago, Thomas Mann left Kilchberg near Zurich, where the radiance of the blue lake, the beauty of rolling summerly hills, the majesty of snow-covered summits now greet his grave, to go to Travemunde for a private celebration of his eightieth birthday. Travemunde is the little resort town on the Baltic Sea outside of Lubeck, Thomas Mann's birthplace, and some readers of his first novel might have felt that his journey there held some premonition of his approaching death. In fact Thomas Buddenbrook, a poetic image of Mann's tragic self, spent the last hours of his life in Travemunde. He left the most corrupted of his corrupted fellow-citizens, after having shared their suicidal entertainments, and at Travemunde he gazed with tired eyes on the eternally moving waves of the ocean, the gray and clouded horizons, greeting them as a symbol of the Great, the Pure, the Undiluted, the Simple, which he had longed for and never reached.

WHEN Thomas Mann died the world lost a poet of prophetic insight into the soul of modern man. He was the first writer in the history of his tragic fatherland who was able to break down the barriers between the obscure, nearly inaccessible depth of German literature and the non-German reader attracted by poetic forms more readable, more polished, more lucid, more harmonious. Goethe, the summit in the landscape of German letters, is to most non-German readers a name, a legend, a symbol—not, like Shakespeare or Virgil, an experienced reality. "Faust" is known as a title, not as a poetic realization of the tragic greatness of modern man, an unprecedented affirmation of the necessity of grace. And those other visions of modern man's destiny that Germany produced in epic form are not even known by their titles.

Thomas Mann shared in the metaphysical outlook of his fellow countrymen. And he found a way to express it in symbols that are perhaps too unconventional, too spontaneous, too unforeseen to be understood by an audience no longer able to enter the enclosed garden of poetic imagination. For the modern audience has lost that sense of the sacramental nature of the poetic symbol which other times kept alive through the formative power of liturgical experience. In Thomas Mann the thinker, the mystic, the poet, we see the phenomenon of a man so powerful as an artist that his works gained the admiration of five continents without revealing to the average reader, or to the average critic, the meaning of their contents.

Mann was aware of this fact. In a letter written to me in the spring of 1953 he expressed his agreement with my conviction that the critics have failed to discover the essence of his novels. The fact that he made the devil in *Doktor Faustus* a critic does not show too benign an attitude toward the critics of his time. There is a German joke about the abstruse profundity of the country's thinkers—"He is so deep that he does not understand himself." This saying has truth in relation to Mann. Beyond him, it points to a larger truth. In *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry,* Jacques Maritain speaks about the "preconscious birth" of poetic images. When the aged Goethe had sent out copies of his newly published *Wanderjahre* to his friends, he begged them to explain to him the meaning of the work. Concerning the mystery of his own productions, Thomas Mann once said that it is a mistake to believe that poets have the best understanding of their works: they like to be informed about themselves.

WHAT then is the hidden meaning of Thomas Mann? He has only one theme: the separation of man from the fertile grounds which condition his existence. His whole vision is of the majestic darkness, the immutable monotony of a mind estranged from truth by a long genealogy of error. He felt that truth exists. He never ceased his search for it. And he died at the age of eighty years without realizing that he had expressed it in his art.

Mrs. Hellersberg-Wendriner is a member of the faculty at Manhattanville College.

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Goethe wrote in his "Maxims and Reflections" that we might say about a great man: "The error of his time was his error. But the nobility of his soul secured his victory over the deception of his age." Thomas Mann was this man. He belonged to the dynasty of German mystics made famous by the names of Eckhart, Jacob Boehme, Angelus Silesius, Novalis and the author of the second part of *Faust*. While their vision of existence was bewinged by the experience of God, their heir in spirit, born in the modern deserts of material superficiality and egocentricity, could do nothing but express his distance from Him.

The young Thomas Mann was alienated from broad human experiences by the hermetic exclusiveness of his social class, and his early-interrupted formal education did not expose him to the wisdom of Greek and Latin, German and Christian antiquity. He lived while he was writing *Buddenbrooks* with his older brother Heinrich in a Roman villa. In carefully preserved seclusion, the two of them closed their ears to the voices of a greater past. They read only modern writers, mostly of Russian and Scandinavian origin. Thus, in his youth, Mann was totally unprepared to resist the impact of a Teutonic dynamism which had deviated from its metaphysical source. The striving energies of his subtle mind were blended with the dissolving light of the philosophy of will, the magic power of the music of Wagner, and the transplanted Christian enthusiasm in the psalterlike beauty of Zarathustra.

In spite of his failure to understand the ontological scope of his own majestic structures, however, Mann sometimes had lightning-like intuitions of their profundity, especially when he tried to explain to his readers what had emerged from the unconscious regions of his lonely God-bound soul. One day, for instance, he spoke in the Library of Congress in Washington on the leading idea of his biblical novel: *Joseph and his Brothers*. He pointed to the universal, the theological, tendency of this work. "What I had in mind," he said, "was the gradually unfolding detachment from the idea of God as it manifests itself in the succession of several generations."

Abraham's form of inner reality seemed to Mann identical with his nearness to God. The patriarch cherished the ideal that it was of all-embracing significance to discover a Highest Being whom he could serve. The vision of this Supreme Being was not given to him without personal efforts. His longing to recognize it, to approach it, was the reason for his soul's relentless strife. Jacob, representing the second stage of development, appeared to Mann as half-detached. He compared him with the figures of Rodin, still embraced by stone, but slowly emerging to reach out to open space. The subjectivity, the sentimentality, the egocentricity of Jacob's piety stood between him and the object of his reverence.

This sentimental father, with his expansive individualism and the pompous glory of his religious self, clouded the perspectives of his son Joseph, who was endowed with the power of a genius to discover the nakedness, the divine economy in the structure of existence. His genealogy threw him into the void of uncertainty. Here he moved without ground under his feet, with all the might of his eagle-like soul caught up in the storms of fate. He was betrayed by a tradition which had lost its sacred roots. He is the very symbol of twentieth-century man. Mann's Joseph in Egypt, therefore, had to lose himself in the cult of practicality. Cut off from spiritual creativity, he had to exhaust his engineering talents in the realm of economic organization: he became "Joseph the Provider."

Unconsciously or consciously, Thomas Mann represented here different stages in the history of Western thought. The age of the Fathers of the Church, the age of the Protestant revolt, and our present age of anxiety in which the great forces shaping the world are not inside but outside of organized religion—in the religious energies of existentialism, the Te Deum of expatriated Christian souls.

Although this analysis is found in the work of one who had been moved by the spiritual energies of the secular world to rediscover its Christian roots, its objects are revelations of the Holy Ghost clothed in the images of a secular poet. In his biblical novel, as in all other instances of his inspired lucidity, Mann is exact in his symbolic detail. He reminds one here, as elsewhere, of the words of Rilke, his contemporary: "He was a poet, therefore he hated the inexact."

THOMAS Mann ascribed to his *Doktor Faustus* an identity of form and content. This judgment is valid not only for this novel: it was the sign under which all of his creations were born. And it is the fundamental criterion of art in its absolute form. The epic technique, which Mann used in his biblical novel, as well as his other works, can be described as an application of the principle of expressionistic abstraction. The design of each of the leading figures has as its functional center one quality of unifying might: namely, the awareness or lack of awareness of its relation to a Supreme Being. Thus we have here the unique example of a poetic power devoted to a single idea as the structural principle of an epic edifice. Perhaps we are able to find in this unique integrity the explanation and justification for the universal success of works which nobody understood.

In the epic technique of reducing the existential pattern of his characters to the nucleus of one unifying

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quality, Mann found an artistic principle to express the secret functioning of the "Gestalt" of the human soul. Thomas Aquinas names this quality "the Habitus" of the human person. He expressed in definition what Mann expressed in symbolic form. For the artist in St. Thomas insisted that every glance of the human eye, every motion of the human hand, every step we make, every word we speak, everything we cherish, every line an artist draws and the color he chooses, yes, even the features of our face, the form of our body speak out the principle which constitutes our outer and inner reality—which is the awareness of our created self and the execution of this awareness in our actual existence. Consequently, in his desire to make form and content identical, Mann tried unconsciously to write the eternal poem of the image of God in man.

Mann sometimes pointed to a certain symmetry in the chronology of important dates in his life. But not knowing the essence of his work, nor his historical role, he could hardly understand the symbolic meaning of the date of *Buddenbrooks.* It emerged on the borderline between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. It marked the finale of the era of positivism, and was at the same time an overture to the rebirth of a metaphysical thought which recognizes the architectural law of reality.

In 1912, twelve years after the publication of *Buddenbrooks,* the famous *Werkbundausstellung* in Cologne proclaimed the beginning of a new age, a new awareness of the reality of the spiritual. Not many understood the proclamation. The Comforter, the Spirit of Union and Love still had to appear in the disguise of secular culture—but speaking-out the same truth which the towers of the Cathedral of Cologne never ceased to proclaim.

Krupp tried in the neighboring valley of the Ruhr to drown out this new message in the production of arms, thus heralding a period of suffering unheard of in the history of the human race. While Rome was encouraging the efforts of Neo-Scholasticism to rediscover the functional, the gothic nature of the human mind, new forms of spoons and dishes and chairs and tables and houses and bridges symbolically spoke the language of the new theologians: both proclaimed the beauty of the structure of reality.

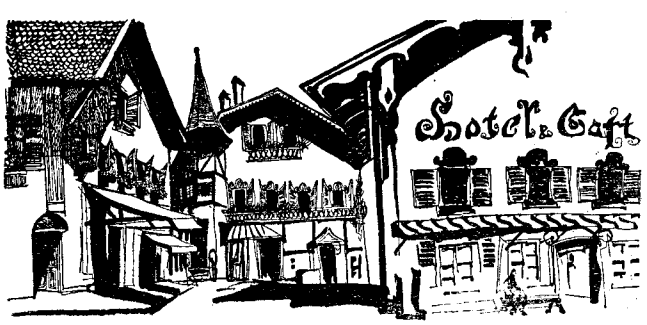
Franz Marck, Kandinsky, and Lionel Feininger worked under the inspiration of Cézanne and Van Gogh. These titans of modern art showed-forth in the functional beauty of their compositions a will to reach beyond the naturalism of the unconquered detail. The Impressionist sense for the nuance was abandoned. New means were discovered to express a belief in the simplicity of the structure of Being. They prepared the way for an appreciation of the structural beauty of Rockefeller Center and the edifices of Frank Lloyd Wright. The new functional age was born.

In this landscape of the functional age we must seek for the undiscovered reality of Thomas Mann, the artist, the man. Most of his critics have seen in him a writer who stands for "Art" in contrast to "Life." It was Harry Hatfield who had the courage to call this dichotomy absurd. Their statement has a certain surface truth but failed to uncover those depths which give Mann his whole meaning.

Life is indeed the object of the poet. But as in all great poetry it is life in its ultimate sense—the Life of the Eternal Mover, the Creator of stars and mountains and men. Art is indeed here in opposition to life. It is not art as such—but the art of our own epoch which has lost the grounds of reality. The hero of *Doktor Faustus* discovered that the decline of modern art was caused by the loss of the protecting and inspiring framework of the Liturgy.

INTEREST in the structure of being was already awake in the untaught author of *Buddenbrooks,* who, in spite of his external culture, was an intellectually neglected, spiritually starved youth. As in his later biblical novel, the young Mann saw his ancestors in the light of their distance from God. The most impressive characters in *Buddenbrooks,* the third generation—Thomas, Antonie and Christian—clearly represent variations on Mann's one and all-embracing theme, the distortion of reality through the loss of an awareness of ultimate things. Mann interrelated their various deviations from the order of Being to an existential pattern of time-less significance.

Antonie sacrifices the enthusiasm of her soul, the treasure of her womanhood, to a cause of lower order. In rejecting a young man of the aristocracy of heart and mind for a man of wealth—in the interest of her father's commercial firm—she perverts the very order of being. Her brother Christian, unable to accept the idol of his brother and sister, having no life center at all, became the very image of eccentricity. Spending his youth in England and South America, living without home and family and business, making a club of his home, perverted outsiders of society his



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friends, and a prostitute his wife, he has the strength of the weak. His existential pattern is the rejection of the unreality of the bourgeois world of his town and family without being able to find an individual reason for existence.

Antonie and Christian Buddenbrook survive the finale of the novel. To a certain degree they are justified in their courage to live according to their perverted standards of being. But Thomas Buddenbrook, a man of reflection, potentially a philosopher, endowed with a talent for discipline and total self-surrender, commits that sin against the Spirit which cannot be forgiven. In sacrificing his ideals to a cause so crass that he never could believe in it, he represents the total perversion of man. There is an observation in Kierkegaard's journal which explains his tragedy: "Since God is a subject, the rejection of his reality has to be of absolute nature and consequences. Who denies the existence of God, does not hurt God, but himself. He annihilates his very existence." Thomas Buddenbrook is a symbol of this self-annihilation. He sins against reverence for God, reverence for his fellow-men, reverence for himself, by choosing in their place that lowest form of reverence—reverence for material wealth.

His physical death symbolizes the horror of his non-existence. At the moment of his death he lies on the pavement of his paternal city. His eyes are turned away from the radiance of a mid-day in early April. His noble features are soiled by a gray mixture

of dirt and snow. His bleeding forehead warms the coldness of the pavement. His outstretched arms embrace the stony deadness of the ground of the commercial city to which he had sacrificed the inborn greatness of his soul. The death of Thomas Buddenbrook stands-out in the landscape of modern literature, a symbol of universal significance. It proclaims what Berdyaev calls the fallen image of modern man, and in this image we find the key to Thomas Mann's work.

FROM POLAND

Hope Behind the Curtain

THE red stars and the red flags on the factory chimneys and on the mine towers were blackened with smoke, and the smoke hanging in the sky over this huge industrial area was so thick that the sun seemed weak and strangely yellow. Even the slogans on the walls to speed up production and the gigantic portraits of the best shock workers, or "stakhanovists," were blackened with smoke. Out of the coal mines came elevator load after elevator load of strong proletarians in helmets and overalls who had finished their work, and other proletarians, who were starting theirs, disappeared into the earth. The rhythm of work was terrific; the noise of the cranes, the locomotives, and the factory sirens was deafening. This area in southwestern Poland is one of the biggest industrial areas within the Eastern bloc, with mines next to mines and a *kombinat* of factories combining with other groupings of factories for hundreds of square miles. It is the pride of the Polish Communist regime. In Europe it can be compared only with the Ruhr area or "the black country" in England.

This is how it looks on the surface: like the setting of a Soviet Russian propaganda film and hard to recognize for anybody who knew it before the war. But the surface is one thing and what is beneath it is another. The surprises I encountered were indeed great.

During a religious holiday I went to another part of the area, Piekary Slaskie, where in the middle of a forest of factory chimneys, a shrine arises on a hill, called the Calvary. I wanted to see how the struggle between the Church and the Communist rulers had developed among the proletarians in this most typically industrial area, since the day Cardinal Wyszynski was arrested a couple of years ago because of events which had taken place on this very spot.

ALREADY, early in the morning, the whole region was in movement. People were hanging in clusters outside the slow-moving, old-fashioned streetcars. On the sidewalks there was an uninterrupted stream of them, strangely contrasting to the practically total absence of traffic, which is characteristic of Communist countries. All were moving in the same direction, men, women, and children and

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near the shrine the crowd had thickened to a point that the car could hardly move. The church on the hill was an ugly brick building, vaguely gothic like two other churches nearby; the crowd was impatiently standing in line outside. As it proved physically impossible for me to squeeze myself in, I finally found my way to the choir near the organ. I will never forget what I witnessed from there: the confessionals were besieged to such a point that the priests had to hear confessions in the open, as I saw later outside the church, and the lines for Communion seemed to be without end. Everyone without exception participated in the singing of the lovely Polish religious hymns in a way and with a feeling I had never witnessed in the West.

Finally, most of this crowd gathered in the park round the church on the hill to attend High Mass in the open. After a sermon which lasted for nearly an hour everybody knelt on the ground during the elevation. Here again their attitude of utter dedication and of simple childlike piety made a striking impression. I watched these people and there was no doubt about it, they were the same grassroots proletarians I had seen in the mines in overalls and helmets among the Communist symbols, all of them factory workers or miners and most of them men in their prime of life. Rosaries were clutched by hands blackened and hardened in the heaviest of work or the pages were slowly turned in missals worn from use. When Mass was over a crowd of nearly a hundred thousand slowly left the park around the shrine in order to return the long way home. In what industrial area of the West would such a religious manifestation be even imaginable?

It was in this very place, on this very occasion that Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski preached a couple of years ago to a much larger crowd, so immense that it could not even enter the park, and that a tough miner, a real shock-worker type, during a silent moment, shouted at the top of his voice with the whole strength of his lungs: "Down with Communism!" It was the straw that seemed to have decided the fate of the Cardinal, who was arrested soon afterwards, while the bishop of the diocese was deported.

A few hours later the same day I took part in the pilgrimage to Czestochowa, Poland's famous national shrine, not far from the center of the industrial area, a place which is rapidly becoming an industrial area itself. Czestochowa is a symbol for Catholic Poland in its eternal struggle against its non-Catholic neighbors, against the Protestant Germans and Swedes and against the Orthodox Russians. Just now it was celebrating the three-hundredth anniversary of the fruitless Swedish siege of 1655, but the intention was obviously something else: it was intended to strengthen Catholic Poland in its struggle against the latest Russian disguise, Communism. Czestochowa, the national shrine, the black Virgin, the Polish miracle in spite of all, the fortress that has never fallen.

At a great distance from Czestochowa I passed by long processions of pilgrims, streaming to the shrine from all parts of Poland. Most of them were walking and had been walking for days and weeks. Some of them came from Bialystok and Jaroslaw on the Soviet border, others from Warsaw, Posnan and Krakow. Still others belonged to the former Polish minorities in Soviet Russia, which have been dumped into the territory—which belonged to Germany before the war—from their new settlements in Breslau, Leignitz, and Stettin. They were all carrying banners, crosses, and statues of the black Virgin of Czestochowa, singing, praying, and dragging their feet, dead-tired. The majority of these were not workers as in Stalinogrod, but farmers, a real migration of peasants, timeless and somehow as irresistible as a rising tide or a force of nature. They did not look to right or left, but only straight ahead. They did not talk much as they probably were too tired and seemed simply to be drawn on mysteriously by some powerful force. Some of them came from the new kolkhozes, collective farms, and some were smallholders, but it did not seem to make any difference.

I REACHED Czestochowa at sunset, and the shrine with its medieval towers and beautiful ancient fortifications on its rock in the immense green plain looked like an enchanted castle in a fairy tale. And what I experienced there seemed unreal indeed, the more unreal the darker it became in the evening, until it almost seemed a dream and I had to rub my eyes in order to believe the amazing scene I beheld there.

On the bastions primitive confessionals were erected in rows, with a short distance between each, to take care of the tired pilgrims upon their arrival, for there was no room in the churches and chapels. Some of the priests had to hear confessions three or four hours or more without interruption, and such were the crowds that confessions continued throughout the night, and finally the confessors looked as tired as the pilgrims.

In the chapels filled with reminiscences of the Polish history and above all in the chapel of the Black Virgin, Communions were distributed by the tens of thousands. In some chapels pilgrims could be seen outstretched in the form of a cross on the cold marble floor, their faces downwards, according to an old Polish practice, in order to fulfill a vow. As the dusk was falling a procession was formed on the bastions, several miles long and led by the clergy and a group of bishops. In the cloisters, on the steps leading down to the crypts, and leaning against the innumerable confessionals,

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the most exhausted pilgrims could be seen fast asleep, still clutching their rosaries or cheap pictures of the Black Virgin. There was something in their attitude of confidence and familiarity that gave the unmistakable impression that they had finally reached the security of home.

But they would not sleep long, for in the gathering night a crowd was assembling round the shrine, everyone with a burning candle in his hand, a crowd so enormous that it finally looked like a sea of flickering lights melting into the distant horizon of the plain in all directions. More than two hundred thousand people had gathered. When, finally, on the floodlit bastions above, a bishop in his full robes began his sermon, the crowd was completely silent, anxious not to lose a syllable. I was on the bastions behind the bishop; the crowd below appeared like one huge being, replying with one voice to the bishop, when, now and then during his speech, he asked questions. It seemed as if this crowd in a strange passionate way clung to its past and to its creed—and clung all the more desperately as the world surrounding it is shaken to its very foundations. It is hard for Catholics in the West to imagine what this atmosphere is like; it most reminds one of a frightened child clinging to its mother. It is a passionate tribute to the past, to what appears as firm and lasting, a tribute which more and more becomes a single flaming protest against the present.

When the bishop had finished, the crowd broke into a song, powerful, disciplined and confident, while the plain all round was in darkness. In one of the towers a man was standing watching the scene and leaning his head against the windowpane. I can't disclose his name, but he was known in Poland before the Communists took over.

"This is the real Poland," he said, "Poland that has always been and will always be. They [he meant the Communists] do not dare to stick their noses in here. They have been powerless against all this and are now only looking for a way to get out of it. Now they try to save face by saying that they are so tolerant, all of a sudden. At each great religious feast there are as many people here as this and sometimes many more. Never before have faith and spirit been greater and deeper. *They* [and he meant the Communists again] realize now that *we* have won the battle. . . ."

GUNNAR D. KUMLIEN.

Contributions for aid to the victims of recent floods may be sent to your local chapter of the American Red Cross.

THE SCREEN

WHAT ARE HEROES, PROPHETS, MEN?

NO doubt the most amazing thing about "To Hell and Back" is that the makers of this good movie were able to tell the story of the most decorated soldier in American history and still make this young man credible. Besides giving the picture a handsome production in Technicolor and CinemaScope, Aaron Rosenberg wisely chose Audie Murphy to play himself. Audie, himself, is almost as incredible as his story: though in his early thirties now, he still looks like the boy in his teens who entered the army, after being turned down by the navy and marines, and covered himself with glory. But there's nothing glorious about Audie, and in the movie he plays the modest, humble, likable young man he is. When you see him make like a hero at Anzio or in Southern France or along the Rhine, or when you see him refuse a commission or weep dry tears for a buddy or get smothered in medals, you see a man of heroic dimensions who emerged from the battle knowing a veteran is always scared and a hero is only a man who did his best.

Although "To Hell and Back" is principally a war film, Gil Doud, who wrote the script from Murphy's autobiography, uses the scenes of hardship from Audie's early youth well to introduce the big show that follows. But I shouldn't say "big show," because Director Jesse Hibbs is very careful to keep any aspect of the movie from being just a big show. Hibbs is particularly successful in conveying the spirit of friendship that slowly builds up among soldiers who go through battle after battle together, whether that battle be actual hard-fought combat or the continuous struggle for a few lines of dirt that always lie ahead. Marshall Thompson, Charles Drake, Jack Kelly, Paul Picerni and others portray the comrades Murphy grew to love—and most of whom he lost. "To Hell and Back" is a fine tribute to a man and an engrossing movie but more important, it views war not as a lark for heroes but as a scourge.

WE have had so many films lately patterned along the man-must-stand-up-and-fight lines of "High Noon," "Shane," and "Bad Day at Black Rock" that any new contender in this field of rough-and-ready westerns with a message must be able to stand up and fight for its position. "The Man from Laramie" is a thoughtful contender with James Stewart as the rugged hero who's out to fight all of New Mexico—alone, if necessary. His good pal, Wallace Ford, is on his side, and so is rancher Aline MacMahon when she discovers Jimmy means business. Lined up against untalkative,

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fast-shooting James are Arthur Kennedy, Donald Crisp, Alex Nicol, Jack Elam and several others who can also shoot and fight well. For a long time you're not sure whose side Cathy O'Donnell is on. As a matter of fact, for a western, even one with a point, "The Man from Laramie" has an unusually complicated story with involved relationships between the characters who have to wiggle their way out of this knot. Anthony Mann has directed these people well, and the handsome scenery brightened by Technicolor and CinemaScope is mighty impressive. But the total effect is one of carefully planned entertainment; its vicious scenes are very brutal indeed, and the good cast work very hard to keep you interested. They succeed, but not with the wallop that the serious items in the High Noon school had.

PERHAPS a good film could have been made from William E. Barrett's novel, *The Left Hand of God,* but this extraordinary story had several strikes against it in the first place, and unfortunately Producer Buddy Adler and Director Edward Dmytryk and Scriptwriter Alfred Hayes did little to solve the problems. The production itself, in CinemaScope and De Luxe Color, is fine, but the story still has that embarrassing situation of the fighting man posing as a priest in a small Chinese village where the good people think he is the real thing; his kindness to them and their kindness to him results in a great deal of good before he admits his hoax to the bishop and leaves to accept whatever punishment is due him. What makes this plot as visualized somewhat hard to take is that the film makers don't reveal to us until the story is well along (and we have already been mystified by Humphrey Bogart's strange behavior as a priest and Gene Tierney's strange attraction toward this man she thinks is a priest) that Bogart is an American fleeing from War-lord Lee Cobb and only used the costume to escape. If you can accept a plot of this kind that has practically no depth, you may find "The Left Hand of God" worth your effort.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

COMMUNICATIONS

"THE RIGHTS OF NON-CONFORMITY"

New York, N. Y.

TO the Editors: I hope it will hearten you somewhat to learn that at least one reader of The Commonweal thoroughly approved of your editorial support of the demonstrators against the Civil Defense drill ("The Rights of Non-Conformity," July 15). But your case could have been strengthened infinitely if you had taken up the real questions that the demonstrators raised. They charged that Civil Defense is completely useless against Atomic and Hydrogen weapons, and that its actual functions are militaristic and potentially totalitarian. Are these charges factually true?

According to the most recent figures made public by the Atomic Energy Commission (figures which there are very, very good grounds to suspect of conservatism), one Hydrogen Bomb can spread over an area of 7000 square miles enough radioactive material to kill everyone exposed to it within 24 hours. This one fact invalidates the drills, for it means that one bomb would make it necessary for everyone in New York City to be forced to take shelter and remain inside not for 15 minutes, but for several hours and in many cases more than a day, while all around them buildings fall and fires rage. The evident impossibility of this has led the most responsible defenders of Civil Defense to propose mass evacuation of our cities as an alternative. But to evacuate the 15,000,000 people who live close together on our Atlantic Seaboard from Boston to Baltimore, including the old and the sick, on roads which are impassible today on an ordinary Sunday afternoon, is an even greater impossibility. As I said in the magazine *Contemporary Issues,* this is the final *reductio ad absurdum* of Civil Defense. *All* would have to be evacuated, for not one Bomb would fall, but many, and any who survived would find themselves in a dead world of uninhabitable ruins of cities and contaminated food and water, with the prospect of dying of lingering radioactivity made almost bearable by the thought that they would not have to see their children.

If Civil Defense is not defense, what is it? It has been presented to us as reassurance, reassurance that we can go to war, win, and survive to return to normal again: real estate deeds have been photostated in New York City, says the *Herald-Tribune,* so that our post-atomic world can be reconstructed, slums and all, without violating the rights of property. A military program cannot be based on the prospect of universal destruction in the event of war.

And Civil Defense serves the cause of regimentation more directly than that. The New York City *World-Telegram and Sun* reported that Holland is drafting men for Civil Defense work. Similar proposals have been heard even in America. In New York City and elsewhere a special corps of Civil Defense auxiliary police has been established who are armed with clubs, even now can arrest people, and can be armed to shoot them in any situation (not just a C.D. drill) which is labeled a public emergency. The end to which such developments tend is best expressed by Sen. Kefauver's astonishingly unpublicized

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call for a Civil Defense system of martial law "with power to shoot people if necessary."

The demonstrators on June 15 did not interfere with anyone's freedom to take shelter. They presented themselves only as rational men and women peacefully protesting irrationality. Was what they protested irrational? Quite apart from all questions of the tactics they used against it, it was.

ROBERT ILSON.

"WISHING WON'T MAKE IT SO"

South Orange, N.J.

TO the Editors: I am baffled by your editorial "Wishing Won't Make It So." [Aug. 26]. Your "puzzled" Europeans must include some who were appalled by what they described as our belligerent, uncompromising attitude toward the Communists. Now that we have (most reluctantly on Mr. Eisenhower's part) accepted Mr. Churchill's "parley at the summit" (to help win the election for Mr. Eden) and have consented to explore the possible necessities behind the new Soviet amiability, precisely why should they be puzzled? Or is it you who are puzzled?

You quote, somewhat wistfully, the eve-of-great-decisions speech of Mr. Stevenson, implying that Mr. Eisenhower pursues a less realistic, less resolute, policy. But was it not Senator George who first among Americans echoed Mr. Churchill's proposal, and do not leading Democratic members of Congress insist that Mr. Eisenhower merely follows the policies of his Democratic predecessors?

A fairly regular reader of The Commonweal (and generally an admiring and respectful one) I have not been able to translate into concrete terms your own lofty generalizations on foreign policy. Lacking responsibility, we can all be verbally facile. But what would *you* do if you were President?

EDWARD F. BATAILLE.

"A SPANISH DECISION"

Thetford Center, Vermont

TO THE EDITORS: May one of your most faithful(?) readers ask you to make a cheerful and non-recriminatory correction of your July 8 editorial "A Spanish Decision" concerning the recent ruling of a Spanish court on marriage? As I see it, your editorial contained a factual error and an error of omission in interpretation.

First, you say that the ruling of this court, the Madrid Court of Appeals, "affirmed the legal right of a baptized Catholic to contract a non-religious, civil marriage with a non-Catholic person." It is true that the news story in the New York *Times* on this ruling carried the erroneous headline, "Spain to Accept Mixed Marriage;" but the fifth and sixth paragraphs of that story contradicted the headline and nullified the interpretation which both you and the *Times* correspondent put upon the story. It said:

> In the future baptized Catholics may contract civil marriage with non-Catholics without the permission of the head of the diocese in which they reside. However, the Court of Appeals provided that they must prove to the satisfaction of the judiciary that they have "either abandoned or separated themselves from the church," or that "better still, they belong to another faith which they not only have embraced but are actually practising."

Now, this does not give to anyone the right of "mixed marriages," as Americans understand that term. It does not confer upon "baptized Catholics" the right to marry non-Catholics; it confers that right only on ex-Catholics, and it puts upon them the burden of proving that they are not Catholics before they may participate in a civil ceremony. The only new right that the court's decision confers is the right to quit the Church without suffering one of the traditional penalties meted out to the renegade.

Second, you did not tell your readers that even if your interpretation had been correct and the Spanish government had decided to legalize civil ceremonies for the marriage of Catholics to non-Catholics, your Church would not recognize the legality of such marriages. Your language created the impression that the Church's only objection to such marriages is in the moral realm. "Obviously," you said, "we do not believe that Catholics have a moral right to enter into a civil marriage. But the Spanish Court was ruling on a legal right, and that is quite a different matter."

Yes, it is a different matter, but was it fair for you to stop there and not to tell your readers, many of whom are non-Catholics, that under the rules and doctrines of your Church a civil mixed marriage without the usual discriminatory pledges against non-Catholics is not merely immoral but totally and unequivocally illegal? Your Church, operating as both a political and ecclesiastical entity within each national sovereignty, officially teaches that no civil government has the power to marry a Catholic. As Father Henry Davis puts it on p. 233, Vol. IV, of his *Moral and Pastoral Theology*:

> Since, however, the Church has laid down laws concerning the celebration of marriages where one or both of the contracting parties are Catholics, and since these laws bind under pain of invalidity, the Church does not recognize the civil contract made by a Catholic as a valid marriage, nor the right of

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the State to declare Catholic marriages valid in consequence of the mere civil form, or invalid for want of it . . .

If you had filled in this interpretation of Catholic law for the benefit of your non-Catholic readers, it would have been apparent that the rigid discriminatory rules against mixed marriage which still prevail in Spain after this court decision are not simply the product of a reactionary national hierarchy but the natural effect of the policy of the Holy See in a predominantly Catholic country.

PAUL BLANSHARD.

We have no wish to be recriminatory—or, for that matter, uncheerful—but we cannot make the correction Mr. Blanshard asks for, since the position we took in our July 8 editorial seems to us correct.

Mr. Blanshard believes that our editorial contained both an error of fact and an error of omission. Factually, he says, we erred when we wrote that the Madrid Court of Appeals "affirmed the legal right of a baptized Catholic to contract a non-religious, civil marriage with a non-Catholic person." Our error, he thinks, lies in the fact that the "baptized Catholic" must prove to the Court that he has abandoned his religion and is therefore an "ex-Catholic." What the Spanish law really permits, Mr. Blanshard says, is the legal marriage of "ex-Catholics."

This really seems to us a rather meaningless play on words. Since the Church has jurisdiction over the marriage of all baptized Catholics, any Catholic who attempts to contract a civil, non-religious marriage is, by that very fact, cut off from active Communion with the Church, is ex-communicate, and is therefore, in a certain sense, an "ex-Catholic." We felt no need to spell-out this fact in our editorial, since it is self-evident that any Catholic who would attempt to enter into a civil marriage is, de-facto, an "ex-Catholic" as Mr. Blanshard uses the term. On this point, it seems to us, we did not err factually; we merely failed to explain the obvious.

The second point is similar. Mr. Blanshard accuses us of failing to mention the fact that the Church does not recognise either the legality or the morality of civil marriages contracted by baptized Catholics. Obviously it does not, nor can it, since the Church retains her jurisdiction over all baptized Catholics until their death. But this fact does not bear on the point we made—that the Spanish State now permits those Catholics who have abandoned the Church to contract a civil marriage—and this point still seems to us important from the standpoint of civil liberties in Spain.

THE EDITORS.

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OF NOTE

"I CONFESS"

THE *Pilot,* official paper of the Boston archdiocese [49 Franklin St., Boston 10, Mass.] recently ran a lead editorial on the tenth anniversary of Hiroshima. We here reproduce substantial excerpts from the editorial:

A very important anniversary was recorded [in August] and it did not lack notice in the papers and journals of America. It was ten years ago on August 6 that the first atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima in Japan. During the last few days we have been reading with special interest the various commemorative pieces—full of drama and suffering, with some fear still, and a little foreboding. They were serious and impressive but something was missing in them all.

No one has dared to speak of GUILT. Isn't it about time, now, ten years later, to try to be honest with ourselves and face up to the terrible implications of what we once caused to happen. The greatest single act of human destruction in the history of the world must be placed on our doorstep—and we did it a second time at Nagasaki the next day as if to show that it was no accident. No barbarian in the history of man ever snuffed out human life more wantonly, or with such speedy effectiveness. In a triumph of technology did we blow out the small spark of conscience?

If any other nation had committed this crime every map made by men for a hundred years would edge its boundaries in black to record its infamy. But this is the richest and most powerful nation on earth, with the highest standard of living, with the widest educational opportunities; this is a time of heady prosperity and immeasurable progress; America stands at the top of the world in men, material, and arms. Who will accuse her? The dreadful pity is that she still refuses to accuse herself.

It is possible of course to make excuses for Hiroshima and for Nagasaki. Did they not hasten the end of the war? Did they not actually save American lives, and prevent months of suffering even for the Japanese? . . . .

But when all the excuses are heard and all the circumstances weighed, we still murdered in one single flash tens of thousands of innocent people who were unarmed, unwarned, and unprotected. Can we think that God will not ask us to answer for this? So many other things were possible for us. We could have dropped it on some lonely island showing the enemy its power and demanding surrender. Or we could have saved it for some totally military target. But we chose two populous cities and we destroyed them both in what historians may one day call the most reprehensible military decision of all time.

The supreme tragedy of this moment—a decade later—is that we still refuse to strike our breast and acknowledge our sin. Some people describe present American aid around the globe in terms of a response to the guilt we unconsciously feel for the crime of using the atomic bomb. If it is so, it is not enough. We must first accuse ourselves, acknowledge our crimes even if done in blindness, and only after the purification of self-accusation, may we set out to repair what we have destroyed. We cannot buy back our innocence with all the gold in Fort Knox. . . .

It is easy to say that this was a decision which was not made by the American people but by a very few of its leaders and made in a moment of anxiety and desperation. If this is true, we must at least admit that we all seemed to condone it, for the American people never denounced the decision or called its makers to account. The nation would be appalled even today if an international tribunal should suggest that those who decided to drop the bomb should be called to some new Nuremberg to answer for it. But God is not mocked! We must wonder, however, how long He will wait for our repentance.

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The Things That Pass

JOHN P. SISK

SHAKESPEARE'S *Troilus and Cressida,* Orwell's *1984,* and a stack of seventeen-year-old *Life* magazines may appear to be an unlikely combination, but having within a week's time reread all three items I find that they have fallen together in my mind into a pattern.

Taken by themselves, the back numbers of *Life* are fascinating enough. In those pre-war days, in case you have forgotten, we were worried about the war between China and Japan, speculating about the meaning of Mussolini and Hitler and observing with uncertainty our own Brown Shirts and Black Shirts, disturbed by a wave of strikes, and trying to make up our minds about Roosevelt. We listened to H. V. Kaltenborn (then in his pundit days), Kate Smith and Lowell Thomas; watched Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, Sabu, Shirley Temple, Deanna Durbin, and the *March of Time.* Joe Louis appeared indestructible, the Pittsburgh Pirates did well, Corrigan went the wrong way, and Amelia Earhart was lost at sea. Dresses were shorter, men's suits were tighter and cheaper, the gear shift was moving up the steering column, Father Divine was establishing heaven on the Hudson, everyone had Ripley for breakfast, and three thousand a year was considered a pretty fair salary.

The effect of all this in pictures (simply to read about it is another thing) is paradoxical. On the one hand, the look of the world four or five years before the war is still recognizably modern. Gadgets, slogans, styles, products, public and private rituals, many of the faces, the format of the magazine—all convey to the 1955 reader a certain sense of contemporaneity. He still has the feel of this world, as he probably has not the feel of a world ten years younger.

On the other hand how long ago it all seems! These pictures can give one a sharper sense of time having passed than can mementos of genuine antiquity. That, I imagine, is because what is completely before one's time, or out of one's immediately experienced world, is for most of us out of time: time has washed over it and left it high and dry. Thomas Browne could feel in the ancient Norfolk funerary urns the iniquity of oblivion blindly scattering her poppies, but for the mass of men ancient urns and sepulchers are simply curiosities beyond any felt significance for their living moment. Psychologically, it seems, it is not how long ago something happened but the extent to which, when it is called to our attention, it makes us feel the flux we are part of.

WHAT shocks one into an awareness of the flux is the evidence of an earlier version of oneself, or of what one was intimately associated with, come suddenly upon. There is the disturbing revelation that at a certain point in the past one's moment-to-moment sense of standing on solid ground was mainly an illusion—and the collateral revelation about the certainties of the present moment. It is this revelation that we, like the administration in Orwell's *1984* England, conspire among ourselves to avoid.

This moment-to-moment illusion of standing on solid ground, this sense of being modern and therefore dispensed from what confounded the non-modern, of having at last arrived at the still point the entire past has strained to and of having that achievement for keeps, is what strikes one in the pre-war *Life.* Not that the magazine did not sense to some degree that Miss America's summer was not eternal, that today's progress would be tomorrow's museum piece and today's wisdom tomorrow's folly.

Indeed, *Life* had then as now its often commendable insights into the vanity of the passing show, and certain rather self-conscious references to the eternal verities that mock it. Nevertheless because of its basic, even necessary, commitment to the face of the world, its tendency, as well as that of its readers, was to take the show for what it appeared to be—for it was, at any given moment, a fascinating show.

As a matter of fact, this is both the strength and weakness of such a magazine. It cannot picture the passing show without running the risk, once the show has passed on, of having overvalued or misunderstood it. And the reader who looks back may, because the misevaluation was once his, feel embarrassed, as if he had come across his adolescent love letters. Take the advertisements, which, though they may be no more naive than today's advertisements, seem more naive because of their hyperbolic celebration of what we find now rusting in junk yards or crocheted over by spiders in second-hand stores and attics.

And here under the pictures are the pat assessments of controversial figures whom time has as-

Mr. Sisk is a member of the faculty at Gonzaga University in Spokane.

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sessed otherwise, or the confident analyses of national and international trends that ultimately proved to be as unpredictable as ever. The promise of having achieved something to stand against time—the latest Buick, the new console radio, the reputation of a movie star, an industrial process—now mocks one's pride in modernity. It is the embarrassment a marrying movie star must feel when she reads in an old movie magazine her assertions of undying affection for her antepenultimate husband.

But there is more than embarrassment. There is forced upon one the commonplace but always forgotten realization of the extent to which the modern world, like the world of the Greeks and Trojans in Shakespeare's play, is committed to time and change. Nor is this commitment one of joyous abandon, for all the interest in novelty and progress that characterizes it. For the very effort of keeping up to date, of adjusting to the latest changes, springs in part from the necessity of forgetting that we are in the hands of time and change.

Lecomte du Noüy's categories of biological, psychological and chronological time will not do here. Two other sorts of time seem to be involved: the friendly and exhilarating time we keep up with, which is a protective creation meant to guard us from that other inimical time whose depredations we see in the past where things are dead. Thus to keep up with the times is to have that moment-to-moment sense of standing firm and being delusively safe from that other time which has melted the snows of yesteryear around our grandfathers' bones. We hate and fear this second time and attempt to beat it by making out of change itself a surrogate for timelessness. The wooer in Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" proposes something like this: for to make your sun run (by a total commitment to passion) when you cannot make it stand still is to have some degree of control over it and to be in some measure safe from it.

Since no effort to take the times at face value is ever completely successful, we, and *Life,* are often caught between these two times: sensing the slippery standing of the one and troubled by the insistent pressure of the other. The result is a state of tension, a more genuinely modern characteristic than the material achievements we pride ourselves in.

While some find this tension exhilarating and can work in it, most try to resolve it, usually by an effort at an unqualified acceptance of the times or by an attachment to something that promises to stand against time. Or, as with Thersites in Shakespeare's play, there is the cynical rejection of the time-bound world from the basis of a cynical wisdom: all is wars and lechery. Or again, since time means death, there is the ritual appeasement of both in detective and murder stories.

At any rate, in the current issue of any popular magazine, or in popular fiction and non-fiction generally, the past is used mainly for the purpose of clarifying the present information-wise, or flattering the present and reinforcing one's confidence in it, or indulging one's sentimentality with nostalgia, or as a place out of time into which the idealizations of epic and romance can be projected. Such reading organizes the face of time as does its audience because it is part of its audience.

FROM *Troilus and Cressida,* especially when one gives it the satiric reading so much in favor, one does get a sharp sense of time passing: a troubling sense of mutability based upon the realization of a war originating in lust and pursued irrationally to disaster, and of a love affair beginning with immense sensual promise and ending in bitter disillusion. This sense of mutability we get because the artist, and through him the audience or reader, has found a way to get apart from time so that it can be in a measure controlled and ironically assessed.

To be able to do this requires discipline, technique and courage, for though "To be conscious is not to be in time. . ." still "Only through time time is conquered." The same equipment is needed by the non-artist if while living in time and change he is not to be overwhelmed by them. This equipment most of us have very little of. We are inclined to take the moment as it is currently and conventionally formulated, which is to be taken in by the times' awareness of time. Therefore we have our own version of Shakespeare's story: it will be revealed eventually that Cressida has been stringing Diomedes along to get crucial enemy intelligence; she has the heart of gold we suspected all along; Troilus will rescue her in the nick of time and kill the gross Diomedes with satisfactory violence; the cynical and foul-mouthed Thersites will be hooted off; the benevolent old Pandarus will effect a ransom; and in the final scene the lovers will be back in each other's arms where we want them—indeed, by all means must have them. If something in us doubts the validity of this golden vision, the effort of believing it only makes it dearer.

But to take the disciplined, unillusioned position of Shakespeare, or of any good artist, is to take a point of view that can be bewildering or frightening, where much that seems to be fixed and certain is seen to be fearfully in flux. It is the position one is shocked into, at least temporarily, when he looks into the pre-war *Life.* From this dangerous viewpoint we tend to turn dangerously away or cry out indignantly that the revelation is an idiocy or a lie. Thus it is that much of the resistance to good literature,

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as to philosophy or saintliness, is a more or less willful misconception about the nature of time.

This is also a reason why so much of the literature we value not only has passion love for a theme but takes the experience of passion love on the lovers' evaluation: as a thing that will resist time, as a heightened state of consciousness out of time. Time is the arch-enemy of lovers, as Troilus eventually knows: "Injurious time now with a robber's haste, Crams his rich thievery up, he knows not how. . ." In time passion love cools, changes allegiances, modifies, perhaps tempers and matures to something better; but in time it is no longer passion love.

But in literature where the lovers carry a heavy load of myth, we do not want them to find it out. We want them to ritualize and glorify for us the sense of time stopped and defeated that is part of the experience of passion love. The lovers are therefore mythical champions of sensual man's rebellion against time, and have been so since the earliest days of courtly love. The true consummation of passion love, as the time-defying high priests of courtly love knew, is not marriage, children and diapers (the conditions in time in which time is conquered) but death. This time-defying function of the passion love story is exploited by business in the form of its symbol, cheesecake. The beautiful girl beside the advertised Buick is meant to do more than catch your eye. She intensifies the promise of an achievement of the times that time cannot touch.

WHETHER it is rebellion against time or misconception of time, the back issues of *Life,* and all similar publications that record graphically and embarrassingly our moment-to-moment certainties and vaunts, are menaces to our peace of mind. And so I come again to Orwell. If such literature cannot be destroyed as quickly as it ceases to be current, it ought to be treated as in *1984* the Ministry of Truth treats the records of the past: alters them continually to keep them in conformity with present development and policy, so that there will be no smirk or twinge on the face of time. For Orwell's terrible novel, which is really about the present moment seen in the clarifying expansion of caricature, is among other things a satiric handbook on how to be what the world is always trying very hard to be: time's fool.

BOOKS

The Sicilian World of Giovanni Verga

MASTRO-DON GESUALDO. By Giovanni Verga. Translated by D. H. Lawrence. Grove. Cloth: $3.50. Paper: $1.45.

By JAMES GREENE

THERE were two Italies in the nineteenth century. One of them is well known to American readers and has been fairly exhausted in song and story. That is the Italy of petty courts and small kingdoms centered in cities up and down the peninsula. It was natural that the young Giovanni Verga, when he began to write in the 1860's, should follow the fashion and put this Italy into his first books: *Eros, Tigre Reale, Eva*—these are a young man's response to a vivacious, glamorous world.

The vivacity and glamor were intensified by the fact that Verga had grown up in small Sicilian villages that were part of the other, untold and unsung Italy. There artisans and peasants and fishermen labored in the shadows of history. This was an Italy of ancient customs and timeless continuity, where new winds of nineteenth century progress upset a centuries-old balance.

In his early thirties, Verga returned to his native Sicily and, absenting himself from the felicities of courtly life, told the story of "the blood and sult" in his own region. Under the rich Sicilian sun all manner of life went forward, and Verga laid ambitious plans for a series of five novels, under the collective title of *The Defeated.* Beginning with the peasant and his simple needs, the series would rise through each stratum of Italian society—through bourgeois acquisitiveness and aristocratic pride—and would finally end in a hero whose life was a mixture of all these modes. In each, as a unifying theme, would be the ultimate frustration of man's needs, hopes and desires.

The first of the series appeared in English as *The House by the Medlar Tree;* it is as beautiful and as beautifully told a story of peasant life as any that graces national literatures. The second of the series was *Mastro-Don Gesualdo.* First published in 1888, it is now made available in two editions by Grove Press. The two novels establish the unique order of Verga's genius, and those who enjoyed *The Medlar Tree* will have a special interest in this second work. Unfortunately it is the last of the series: the defeat that was Verga's great theme overtook him, and a third novel never appeared.

Following Verga's plan, the second book deals with a peasant whose aim it is to rise in the social scale. Gesualdo Motta had a keen business head and a fierce ambition to acquire wealth and position. These things made him unpopular in his village, but, sure that money is its own best advocate, Gesualdo stead-

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ily acquired wealth and enemies in proportionate amounts. In the village he was given the ironic name of "mastro-don," a hybrid of the titles for workman and gentleman. But he was far too complex a man to be dismissed as simply avaricious —in each case his petty failures, as well as his final defeat itself, resulted from a generous and kindly spirit.

Gesualdo married a member of the local nobility, Bianca Trao, a frail consumptive girl of a family too impoverished to give her the man of her choice. They had a daughter whose marriage was even more unhappy. For the women here, like the women in *The Medlar Tree,* are ill-equipped for life. Yet they seem to dominate the stories with their poignant beauty of feature and fate—"Eastern and biblical" one critic has called them, lovely Ruths to whom time and circumstance and even life are strange and alien.

Gesualdo arrived at wealth and greatness bitterly waging "the same implacable warfare which he was forced to wage all the time against everybody, and everything . . ." But against defeat neither his own great courage nor the beauty of his wife could prevail. Life, with its possible happiness, slipped between their fingers like the Sicilian sands.

This book is long, but the style, preserved in Lawrence's translation, is spare, elliptical, intense. The stress is turned always inward, away from the author: the result has the weight, the compactness, of a stone.

It was a later writer, W. H. Auden, who remarked that "life is fleeting and full of sorrow, and no words can prevent the brave and the beautiful from dying or annihilate a grief." Verga's last book has life's native courage and beauty and sorrow, but it has, too, the inherent joy of great art, the indestructible delight of genius.

American Catholicism

THE BROWNSON READER. Edited by Alvan S. Ryan. Kenedy. $4.50.

By J. N. MOODY

FEW would question the need for examining the American Catholic heritage. Destined to play an important role in the universal Church and in the country that has been thrust into world leadership, Catholics in the United States are becoming aware of the riches in their national tradition. We have been favored by substantial biographies of outstanding personalities, such at the *Life of James Cardinal Gibbons* by Father Ellis, and with penetrating monographs, such as the *Catholic Church and the Knights of Labor* by Father Browne. The time has come to introduce the Catholic of today to the writings of lasting interest of a small minority of our forebears.

Certainly Orestes Brownson is one of these. We can be grateful to Professor Ryan who culled the enormous Brownson *corpus*, selected those items he considered most significant, cut them to essentials, arranged them topically and chronologically, and furnished prefaces and a general introduction. He makes no claim that his book is a substitute for a thorough knowlege of Brownson, but since his writings are available only in a twenty volume edition—now out-of-print, and with some of these selections not even in it—the editor has done a real service.

The reviewer read the volume during the wind and rain of *Connie's* passing. It was a suggestive setting, for Brownson was seldom far from the center of the storm. Self-educated on the frontier of northern Vermont, he became a minister in several isolated communities. Without the advantage of the fellowship of scholars, he continued a lonely and tortured search for truth that led him through most of the intellectual movements of early nineteenth century America and into contact with much contemporary European thought. After passing through Utopian Socialism and the Boston circle of the transcendentalists, he became a convert to the Church in 1844.

Brownson's conversion brought him into the universal society and to the religious certainity for which he had yearned. But it also created difficult problems of adjustment for this friend of Emerson and Thoreau, this wide-ranging intellectual who had culled so much from his stopping places on the Road to Damascus. He wished to put his talents in the service of the Church. But, intellectually, Catholicism was everywhere in retreat in the mid-nineteenth century — Brownson's thirty-two years as a Catholic were almost exactly conterminous with the pontificate of Piux IX. The predominantly immigrant Church in America was not too certain of its new defender. It is a tribute to Brownson's faith and to his Catholic contemporaries' patience that, despite tension, the alliance perdured.

Most of Brownson's writing is found in periodicals on subjects of current interest. This does not limit their value, for he related his themes to deeper issues. But it did prevent his probing mind from having the opportunity for revision, or even for calm reflection. He might have been said to have kept a journal, written in public and dedicated to intellectual controversy. Constantly he sought for his proper relation to God and to the Church; but equally he strove for the temporal good of man, for social justice and political right. He saw no dualism here, for to him reform without religion was an illusion, and for the Church to fulfill her mission she must be brought into creative relationship with the manifold problems of the age.

To indicate the pertinence of this keen, courageous mind, may I offer this sample: "My own conviction is that our true policy in dealing with the American mind is to study first to ascertain, not its errors, but the truth it still maintains, and to show that this truth can find its unity and integrity only in the Catholic Church." "American society . . . is organized more in ac-

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cordance with the needs of Catholic society, than is any other society on the face of the globe. . ." "No amount of pious training or pious culture will protect the faithful, or preserve them from the contamination of the age, if they are left inferior to non-Catholics in secular learning and intellectual development.

2055 A. D.

THE HILLS WERE LIARS. By Riley Hughes. Bruce. $3.25.

By FRANCIS SWEENEY

SUPPOSE Macaulay's traveler from New Zealand were to be a novelist instead of a painter? Riley Hughes has elaborated the supposition in a skillful novel which plots the trajectory of history beyond the troubled horizon to the Year of Our Lord 2055.

Sure enough, as Macaulay predicted, the Church still exists "in undiminished vigour," but, when Paschal III gives his first blessing *Urbi et Orbi,* The City is no more and the world has been devastated by the "atomic wars." Machinery, transportation, and government are dim memories to the oldest of the handful of men left on the scarred planet. New York is the wilderness Thomas Merton described in *Figures for an Apocalypse*:

"Will hunters come explore
The virgin glades of Broadway
for the lynx and deer?
Or will some hermit, hiding in
the birches, build himself a cell
With the stones of the city hall,
When all the caved-in subways
turn to streams
And creeks of fish
Flowing in sun and silence to the
reedy Battery?"

Here are the cardinals who kneel before the new pontiff for the ceremonial homage: Urban of Trieste, Titular Archbishop of Paris, Clement of Barcelona, Titular Archbishop of Madrid, Gregory of London, Titular Archbishop of New York, Thaddeus of Cologne, Titular Archbishop of Berlin, Joseph of Melbourne, Titular Archbishop of Lisbon, Giles of Boston, Titular Bishop of Brooklyn. Meeting secretly in caves, hiding their corporate identity under the name "The Company of the Fish," the remnant of Christendom carries on the Sacramental life of the Church, sends out missionary bishops to the other islands of humanity, and looks forward to the return to Rome.

The story follows one Kevin of Albany through his boyhood—lived in terror of the marauding bands who finally murder his parents—and sees him join the Company which has rallied around Paschal. After he has explored the ruins of New York, Kevin becomes the civic leader of the Company, and leads them to a new home in a building left almost intact, a great edifice poised above a river, furnished with altars and medieval books, and many statues in vaulted galleries: The Cloisters.

It would be easy to say that the novel does not come off, and some of my esteemed colleagues have been content with that Scottish verdict. Reading sometimes like *Fabiola* and again like *The Swiss Family Robinson,* the story offers characterizations only in primary colors, and by clumsy flashbacks confuses a time-setting already precariously placed in post-history.

Yet in numerous passages the reader's interest and admiration are stirred by the masterful evocation of a world become a *civitas depopulata* after the paradigm of Hiroshima. The survival of faith, and family life, and gentleness are brought out in scenes skilfully underkeyed and related to the wheeling constellations of the liturgy and the everlasting mercy. For all its defects (some of which, one feels, might have been avoided by better editorial direction) this is one of the worthwhile books of the year, a historical novel of power and compassion and calm faith.

"In honor of our great predecessor," says Kevin of Albany, when the Company elects him Pope, "whom we are unworthy to follow, we take the name Paschal the Fourth. And for the motto of our pontificate: *Non in periculo, sed in Domino Deo.*"

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Explorations

THE CAVES BEYOND. By Joe Lawrence, Jr., and Robert W. Brucker. Funk and Wagnalls. $4.75.

By JOHN COURNOS

MAN is a wonderful creature. When he is not sea-diving, climbing the Everest, searching for game in sultry jungles, or contemplating flight to the moon, he is going about in dark caves in search of something not yet discovered, something wholly new. He never stops seeking.

Cave-hunting is a science, the name of which is speleology: the exploration of networks of caves, "like a series of four or five spider webs super-imposed on each other." The "caver" finds something approximating the fabulous Labyrinth, which the Oxford Dictionary defines as "an intricate structure of intercommunicating passages, through which it is difficult to find one's way without a clue." It is a maze, and perhaps worse than a maze, because in the multiple cave described in this book—the Crystal Cave in Kentucky—the passages do not always intercommunicate. It was first made famous by Floyd Collins whose daring ultimately resulted in his death and burial in the Crystal Cave a quarter of a century ago.

It was Mark Twain who said that a skyscraper was so high that it took two persons to see to the top of one. And here it may be said that the Crystal Cave is so many miles of cave that the little army of thirty persons—an equal number lived and worked above ground—did not quite finish their job of exploration even after more than one hundred sixty hours of continuous labor. It was a real ordeal, full of literally invisible dangers. The "cavers" had to inch their way as often as not on all fours, or on their stomachs, through the dark, aided by lights attached to their specially devised headgear. There were places where a single mis-step meant serious injury or death; and there was always the chance of being trapped as Floyd Collins was trapped. Often the con-

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necting passages were scarcely big enough for a man to slither through; there were ample rewards, however, for the effort: an immense high-ceilinged room, a canyon, a lake, perhaps, or a waterfall.

The record here offered opens up a vista on a new, strange world, a unique entity which may justly be numbered among the great natural wonders.

THE EXPLOSION. By Rainer Hilderandt. Duell, Sloan and Pearce. $3.75.

The leader of the "Combat Group against Inhumaneness" here presents nine very personal histories of the uprising in East Germany on June 17, 1953. One was a Russian lieutenant, another a security officer who was killed by the demonstrators; the rest were German workers and prisoners who were all but spontaneously caught up in a drama they hoped would actually lead to their liberation. For a number of hours they swept all before them. Finally, Russian tanks and troops arrived in overpowering numbers.

Some of the leaders believe to this day that the original demonstration could have developed into a massive general strike before which the Russians would have been at sea. They believe that it might then have spread among the satellites and even to the Soviet Union itself, where millions are only awaiting a real chance to overthrow their present rulers. As many see it, the failure of the West to broadcast the extent and success of the uprisings enabled the Soviet authorities to regain control. Ironically some of these heroic men and women remained unemployed for several months after reaching West Berlin.

REVIEWERS

James Greene is a freelance writer living in New York.

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